



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

News Release

September 30, 2005

ICE-LED PROBE TAKES DOWN 6 AREA FALSE DOCUMENT MILLS

DMV, Sheriff, and Taft Police aid in busts netting variety of counterfeit documents

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. — Seven Kern County residents were arrested yesterday for allegedly manufacturing and selling fraudulent identification and immigration documents out of their homes. The suspects were taken into custody on federal and state warrants by investigators with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), assisted by officers from the Kern County Sheriff's Department and the Taft Police Department.

Yesterday morning's arrests follow a far-reaching undercover investigation that culminated Thursday with the execution of search warrants at six area homes, which were allegedly being used as bases of operation for large-scale document fraud. Yesterday's searches resulted in the seizure of computers, media storage devices, and counterfeit documents including false social security cards, driver's licenses, and Resident Alien cards, commonly known as "green cards". ICE agents say the six locations dismantled today appeared to be operating independently of one another.

"Targeting those responsible for making and selling fraudulent documents is an enforcement priority for ICE," said ICE Bakersfield Resident Agent-in-Charge Michael Toms. "Anyone who knowingly and indiscriminately sells phony identity cards is putting the security of our communities and even our country at risk. Documents like this could potentially be used by terrorists or other dangerous criminals to obscure their identities and cover their tracks."

Expected to make their initial appearance in federal court today are: J. Encarnacion Oropeza, 46, Maria Rodriguez-DeOropeza, 46, Joel Fernandez-Mendoza, 39, and Antonia Sanchez-Molina, 37, all of Delano, California; Maria Sandoval-Anaya 34, and Gabriel Gracida-Mejia, 40, of Bakersfield, California; and Manuel Quintino-Perez, 42, of Lamont, California.

Facing state charges are: Joel Torres, 46, from Taft, California and Raul Gamino-Diaz, 46, from Lamont, California.

ICE